

THE RULES OF KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE 161

837 as several Lepchas said when the point was raised 'Who can force a grown woman against her will?' More distantly related women, such as 'aunts', may put up a certain amount of semi-playful resistance, but no rancour is felt if it is overborne.

It is considered to be an act of excessively bad taste to copulate with a heritable wife in her husband's presence, or in such situations that there is a possibility of his witnessing it. These legalised adulteries usually take place during the husband's temporary absence, or else outside the house, in the forests or fields or field-houses; these outdoor encounters are usually very brief, and have a slightly romantic flavour. Copulation inside the house has the advantage of giving longer time, but it also exposes the couple to questionable remarks and a good deal of teasing.

836 One of the results of this situation is that almost all boys and
 ● 864 young men get their first real sexual experience and training from an older married woman. Elder brothers usually explicitly instruct their younger brothers in their rights. In Lepcha theory a woman should never make direct sexual advances—the common Lepcha words for sexual activity are, like the English ones, transitive and one-directioned—but in point of fact I found that in nearly every case men had had their first real sexual experience with the wife of an 'elder brother' or 'uncle' at the woman's direct invitation and solicitation. This is considered altogether desirable; although sexual activity is thought to be as natural and as necessary as eating, it is necessary that boys should be taught to do it properly. Thus Chndo said one day 'If I caught Chimpet (the son of his elder brother Tafoor) sleeping with my wife I shouldn't be cross at all; on the contrary I should be very pleased, for she would be teaching him how to do it properly and I would know that he was in the hands of a good teacher! On the other hand, if I caught a married man, who had a right to sleep with my wife, doing so I should reproach them for their lack of shame in doing in my presence what might better be done in my absence; if I was really angry I should tell other people about it, so that everybody might know how shameless the man had been.'

614 I have already suggested that the *ptso* was possibly earlier a
 835 geographical unit; if this were the case, it seems to me possible that these permissive regulations were evolved to meet the special circumstances. For, with the *ptso* as the geographical unit, the young men would have had no possible sexual partners except through adultery or incest; and, as numerous examples show, such

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597 Milk may also be given to such orphans by the feeder taking it
 853 into his or her mouth and squirting it into the baby's. Two boys
 in Lingthem were artificially reared in this way. If the mother and
 [766] child both die the child is placed in the mother's lap before the
 body is disposed of; similarly if the mother dies in the last months
 of pregnancy the foetus is ripped out and placed on her lap before
 burning or burial.

844 Children normally witness the birth of subsequent siblings and
 • 864 of other children born in the house. Except for one nervous
 adult, Jiroong, who said he was frightened when his younger sister
 was born, children do not seem to regard child-birth with any deep
 emotion. Twelve-year-old Ribu voiced the general sentiment
 when he said that during birth he was not frightened, though he
 was anxious for his mother. Children take birth in a very matter-
 of-fact way; 'first of all a woman becomes pregnant and then she
 puts out a child'. Only adopted children or only children who have
 not had occasion to witness child-birth surround the situation with
 any emotion or curiosity.²

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846 For the first three days of life the baby is considered to be still
 in the womb and all the pre-natal precautions have to be observed.
 It is not even referred to as a human child; it is called a rat-child.
 During those three days the mother must on no account touch the
 ground; were she to do so the blood clot would not descend. The
 father may go out but must not do heavy work such as lifting stones
 or cutting trees; such actions would cause the woman pain in her
 belly. Also nobody except those who live in the house must
 enter the house or see the child; should they do so the mother will
 have terrible pains. If the mother has recovered she can do ordinary
 household work. After the birth feast on the third day the mother
 may go outside as soon as she feels that she is strong enough to do
 so; no ceremony marks the first going out of a newly delivered
 mother, though for the first month she is fed on a special
 strengthening diet of chicken soup and extra strong *chi*.

[783] On the third day the baby is officially born and a special birth
 feast is held for it. Before strangers enter the house the floors are
 scrubbed with wormwood plants, and incense burnt, and every
 member of the house washes his body, first in hot water indoors,
 and then in a stream, and also his clothes, to remove the uncleanness
 of birth.

² See Chapter Fifteen, p. 390.

192 dirt !—and so on. ✓ As a child grows up he will completely abandon
 195 this language, and older people seem quite honestly to forget it.
 Rather like English preparatory school slang, these words only have
 currency during a few years of the life of the individual ; they are
 taught to the young recruits of the childhood-group, and dropped
 as the child takes his place amongst the grown-ups : they are
 always in currency but unused and ignored by three-quarters of the
 population.

857 A certain number of these plays are sexual ; thus the play of
 marriage always ends in simulated copulation ; if the ' bride ' is
 864 another boy, the children tie their penises together. From about the
 age of ten children at marriage feasts and similar gatherings are
 [839] likely to sort themselves into pairs and attempt copulation ; there
 is also a certain amount of mutual masturbation among boys.
 (Everybody, young and old alike, denied the practice of adolescent
 masturbation, and since they were perfectly frank on all other
 questions I have no reason to suppose that they were not telling the
 truth.) Adult Lepchas consider such sex-play extremely funny,
 [522] though very childish ; far from disapproving of the children, they
 are more likely to egg them on.

A ten-year-old child should know perfectly well the permissible
 and forbidden sexual partners in the neighbourhood ; there is the
 general prohibition against sleeping with *num-neu*, and usually also
 a catalogue of permissible partners. In point of fact there is con-
 siderable variation of the age at which the incest barriers are recog-
 nised concretely ; some nine-year-old children knew their relation-
 ship to everybody in the village, while twelve-year-old Ribu, for
 example, though he knew that he must not sleep with his *num-neu*
 was quite vague as to what people were actually included in that
 term. Ribu's ignorance may possibly be explained by the fact that
 his father was dead ; it is essentially the rôle of the father to instruct
 his son in the rules of incest, and possibly Patek, his seventeen-year-
 old brother, had not done so.

857 Although adults never play with children, the children showed
 great pleasure when I used to play with them, and after I had been in
 Lingthem about six weeks used to manifest obvious excitement at
 my arrival, and if I was engaged in something else would do all
 they could to provoke me to play with them. The chief game that
 I used to play was to pretend to chase them ; I would make one or
 two menacing steps in their direction, whereupon they would run
 about a quarter of a mile away, shrieking with laughter, and then

Kurma spies on the birth of Apot.

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'When I was about six or seven I spied on a neighbour giving birth to a baby. I did this by standing under the house floor which was made of crossed bamboo; I did it by myself out of curiosity because I wanted to know what an adult woman's vulva looked like, and to see how babies were born. The woman was hanging on to a rope from the ceiling and an older woman squatted behind her and held her breasts; the woman's belt was loosened and from below I had a very good view of her vulva. The woman was groaning and at each groan the vulva rounded and the head of the child could be seen; between groans the vulva was oblong. Finally after a discharge of yellow fluid the baby was born suddenly; and then the after-birth.' (I put some questions to Kurma about this event; he said he recollected no feelings of disgust or fear; on the contrary, the spectacle was probably exciting. He excuses his conduct by saying he was too young to know shame.)

Early sexual experience.

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● 864

[833]

'When I was eight or nine I used to ask the little girls of the neighbourhood to let me see and touch their vulvas; to which they would consent and then lie down. Nobody told me about sex; I knew naturally as everybody does; it is like eating. At the same time I only knew how to do it properly when at the age of ten I saw my elder brother, aged fifteen, lift a girl's legs in the forest. My first sexual experience was when I was twelve, with a girl of the same age. We were both employed watching animals. I had seen older people and they had urged me to try the girl; she agreed but after one attempt would have no more to do with me. Pulling back the prepuce hurt.'

Practical joke played on Kurma.

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'When I was about ten I was sent to live in a field hut to scare away monkeys and other animals from the ripening grain; with me was a young married man, a relation of Passo's. We had grain and pumpkins to eat. The young man played the following trick on me; he told me to get a big leaf from the forest, which I did; then the young man shat on it and told me to fold it up carefully and carry it right away down to the river; I must not put it near a house or in a field. I did as I was told. This happened for

THE PEOPLE

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and has not yet reached the age of puberty. In spite of this,¹⁵⁹ however, he is well aware of the facts of life, and a few years^[864] ago was seduced by his uncle's wife, a woman of thirty, with whom he is still on intimate terms.

Tafoor's second child is a girl, and although three years¹⁵⁹ younger than Chimpet she looks much older. She already⁸⁶⁶ nurses the two younger children, and knows how to cook, and is perfectly capable, so her father tells me, of running the house. No arrangements have so far been made for her marriage, but Tafoor hopes to hear of a suitable partner during the course of the next few years.

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Chodo is Tafoor's younger brother, and so far has only¹⁵⁹ reached the rank of *Ka-Ne*. He was thirty this year and his^[582] wife, whom he married some ten years ago, is the same age. He told me that when he was about five or six he used to play^[857] at making little houses out of sticks and leaves; also he was⁷⁷⁶ fond of playing with swings, but his parents would not let him do this in summer-time because, so they said, the demons would mistake him for fruit.* As a child he was frightened of devils and did not like walking about alone at night; and even now he does not like going by himself in the forest after dark. When he is alone and feels frightened he prays all the time to Guru Rimpoche to keep him safe. He never carries a^[778] charm "like ignorant people," because if he did this Guru Rimpoche would think he had no faith in his prayers and would therefore do nothing to help him. He knows that his wife has relations with Chimpet but does not mind in the least: "unless one learns, how can one ever be proficient?"^[834] He did the same thing himself as a boy; and even now⁸⁶⁴ frequently goes to the forest with Tafoor's wife, with whom he is of course legally entitled to cohabit. As a child he was sent to school at Mangen but only read the first three books. After this he spent a year in the Maharaja's palace in

* Fruit, as it swings in the breeze, is thought to be plucked by passing devils. Cf. *The Golden Bough*.

1 [i.e., Chimpet, the son of Tafoor, an Umzet. - Analyst]

finished all present went into the altar-room and prostrated themselves several times before the altar. The children, however, omitted this mark of respect. In one corner were two small girls aged about ten and twelve. They were lying on the floor with their knees drawn up, when the mother of the elder, catching sight of her daughter, told her not to display her vulva. This was apparently a quite ordinary remark, for nobody took any notice.

All this time the two Lamas continued to chant, while still playing their cymbals and drum. While this was going on Karma came in and placed a small bag filled with grain round the central neck of the *Go-sum*; he was very drunk at the time. The chanting and playing still continued, and now the *Go-sum* was turned completely round: it now had its back towards the altar. Pichi's mother pulled a few threads out of his coat and dropped them on to the figure. Now Karma took a handful of powdered maize and scattered it on the floor, in the form of a line leading towards the door. This was the road by which the evil spirit, having been expelled from Pichi's body, would finally leave the house. No one might cross this path; and if one wished to get from one side of the room to the other it was necessary to go round and behind the figure, thus avoiding the path. Several men, Karma among them, now lifted the *Go-sum* up and carried it out of the house, carefully following the line of powdered maize. The figure was taken to a spot about four hundred yards away, which had been previously indicated by the Lamas, a boy going in front with a lighted brand to show the way. It was there abandoned and would be eaten by dogs during the night. When it is found that an offering of this sort is not consumed it means that the demons have not accepted it, and that the patient will get no relief from that particular sacrifice.

Singing and drinking were continued throughout the night, but we left as soon as the ceremony was over.

We did not see Pichi for nearly a month, and by then he had completely recovered. He was fat and well, and had a

I should say that "being in love" is a state of mind completely unknown to the Lepchas. There was not in Lingtem, so far as I know, a single instance of a man or woman making a love-match; nor do I think such a thing possible in a society completely devoid of jealousy. It is interesting, however, to note that among Christian Lepchas in Kalimpong and Darjeeling real love-matches are very common and becoming the usual thing among the younger generation: and we have also seen that there is a tendency among such "uncivilised" Lepchas as have worked in Gangtok to make at least some attempt to arrange their own marriages. It should be remembered, however, that in both these cases the free sexual life of the "uncivilised" Lepcha is impossible; in the one case only temporarily, but in the other by reason of a permanently changed code of morals. Can it be that, as a result of these changed conditions the "inherent" but previously sublimated jealousy comes to the surface, at the same time bringing with it the ability to enjoy the "most exalted of human experiences"? I do not know; but, to me, it seems not impossible.

In view of the fact that there is no privacy in a Lepcha house, children are early aware of the method of procreation, and it is a common sight at monastery feasts to see small children of four or five imitating the act of copulation, and not infrequently being egged on by their inebriated elders, who seem to think this an amusing sight. Boys generally commence their sexual life at about the age of twelve, and usually start by being seduced by one of their father's younger brother's wives, if any such are living in the same house. We can now realise that the regulation prohibiting a man from having sexual relations with the wives of his father's elder brothers has a definite purpose, since the father himself is permitted to sleep with these women. Were the prohibition not enforced it would be possible for both a father and son to have sexual relations with the same woman, a state of affairs that is looked upon with marked disapproval, although it is not considered to be actually incestuous.

864 In the same way that a boy usually has his first sexual
 833 experience with a woman years older than himself, so is a girl
 842 generally first seduced by some older man. A number of
 women told us that they started their sexual life at the age of
 ten; and in every case they had their first experience with a
 grown man. The people do not see anything offensive in
 this; and we were unable to convince them that the custom
 is undoubtedly one of the chief causes of the very high rate of
 sterility among the Jongu women. Nothing short of a
 complete examination by a gynecologist would definitely
 establish this point; but it is significant that the several
 sterile women with whom we were on sufficiently intimate
 terms to discuss the subject all owned to having been
 initiated into sex at a very early age, and by men years older
 than themselves.

833 Except when a young boy is seduced by some elder
 relation a woman never makes the suggestion to copulate,
 although she may hint indirectly that she is not unwilling to
 submit. When a youth is interested in any particular girl he
 will generally have his first encounter with her out in the
 forest, or in some other secluded spot; but once relations
 between the two have been established it is usual for him to
 visit her at home. He will, if necessary, travel several miles in
 the dead of night for this purpose. The girl will previously
 explain the topography of the house to her lover and describe
 to him the exact place where she sleeps, so that when the time
 comes he may enter the house silently and make straight for
 her bed. He will usually creep in on all fours, stepping over
 the other sleeping people carefully, so as not to wake them.
 Should he be discovered he will at once run out of the house,
 and will not return that night; but if the pair are not disturbed
 it will generally be about two in the morning before the boy
 takes his departure. He will generally not leave his own
 home until everyone is asleep, so that he can depart un-
 noticed. Should the parents of the girl get to know what is
 happening they will not usually be angry or display any other
 emotion. Tafoor said that he would not mind in the least if he